

How to Conduct a Reference Check

Hi, my name is [Your Name] from [Your Company] and we do this....

Been talking with [Candidate] about a role of this....

Q1: To help get started, could you just give me a stream of consciousness... just a bunch of adjectives, how would you describe [Candidate]?

- This sounds like a warm-up, but this is actually the key question. Listen hard to see what first few adjectives they throw out. Because you said stream of consciousness and they have to come up with words quickly, people have limited time and room to spin their answer.

Q2: How did you know this person?

Q3, 4, 5, 6: Can you give me an example when [Candidate] did behavior X? (tailor this for the behaviors you believe are critical for success in the role]

- Let X = "identified potential partners for a strategic deal", "negotiated and closed a deal", "maintained an important external relationship", "hired, fired, or managed other people", "did something creative", "collaborated with a peer"

Q7: How does this person behave under stress? Describe a scenario when you saw this person hit a wall. How did they react?

Q8: Is this person a MUST hire? Would you hire this person immediately again?

Q9: Have you ever observed this person say or do anything you considered unethical or abusive?

Q10: What is this person's superpower? In which types of situations does this person thrive?

Q10: What is the best way to share feedback with this person? How do they typically process and digest feedback?

Q11: Let's say I told you this person is hired. That they are working for me and now it's my opportunity to help them grow their career. What is the one gift I could give them to help them take their skills to the next level - what would you recommend I do to help them grow?

Q12: And, just before we wrap up, do you have any favorite story about [Candidate]?